

INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS

EDITED BY F. W. HODGE

VOL. V

No. 3



A SERIES OF PUBLICA-
TIONS RELATING TO THE
AMERICAN ABORIGINES

THE RAPPAHANNOCK INDIANS OF VIRGINIA

By
FRANK G. SPECK

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NEW YORK
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
HEYE FOUNDATION
1925

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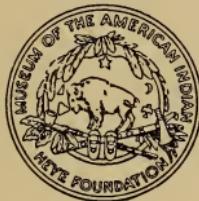
*Museum of the American Indian,
Heye Foundation,
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New York City*

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FOREWORD

 WHILE the existence of two Indian tribes, the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi, in tidewater Virginia has been more or less generally known, there has remained an almost total lack of information concerning the existence of other bands of descendants of the original Powhatan tribes. To some who have long been familiar with the state it may seem difficult to believe that such could be so, yet deeper scrutiny into familiar surroundings often discloses aspects previously unknown, concealed beneath the evident surface of things.

It appears that at least ten mixed groups exist in the same general localities where their ancestors lived. Their names and approximate aggregate numbers are: Pamunkey 300, Mattaponi 75, Upper Mattaponi 75, Chickahominy 400, Rappahannock 500, Nansamund 200, Wicomico (?) 300, Potomac 150, Powhatan 15, Werowocomoco 100. In all they form a body numbering probably about two thousand. Some of these bands are organized, with incorporated charters, while two are still tribal Indians on state reservations: the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi. The Rappahannock, Chickahominy, Nansamund, and Mattaponi, together with the Nanticoke of Delaware (about 50 in number), succeeded in 1923 in reorganizing the "Powhatan Confederacy."

Probably none of the numerous persons of Powhatan Indian classification in the state could now boast of

absolutely pure Indian blood—by which is meant an absolutely unmixed raciality of the potential two thousand ancestors that each would have had in the eleven generations elapsed since their first contact with races of the Old World. They have, nevertheless, neither indulged in nor permitted intermarriage with representatives of the other peoples surrounding them for almost a century—drastic homogamy to compensate for earlier laxity. Only within the present younger generations have some marriages taken place with whites. They have, in consequence, developed an in-bred mixed physical type. This accounts for the high variability which they now exhibit in general. Most observers, however, agree in remarking on their Americanoid characteristics, which would seem to mean, in bulk, the predominance of Indian blood.

These racial considerations are entirely aside from the determination of their social tradition. The latter is emphatic and consistent. It is the one bond by which the various Indian communities cohere. And there is no fair basis of ethnic or historical evidence which would lead the open-minded to distrust it, unless beheld through the eyes of those bound to the deadly routine of race or class prejudice. The reason for referring to this is that the latter exists even among their neighbors.

A word as to their future. I feel much as Mr. Mooney did when he expressed his opinion that the Indian descendants would become an important factor in the rural population of tidewater Virginia not far hence. The community groups have within the last decade awakened to a self-consciousness that is stimulated by

the realization of prosperity acquired through labor and thrift. And their fecundity is high. Contact with other Indian bands, and education both at home and outside the state, have created the revival movement.

Industrial survivals of the original life of these tribes have persisted through the Colonial era to an extent little realized by those to whom American country practices are familiar sights. The maize industry by hand-cultivation, its seed stock and equipment; planting sticks, husking-pegs, mortar and pestle, tree-trunk corn-sheller and tree-trunk grain barrel, all bespeak nativity in America. Planting superstitions, corn-husk plaiting, splint basketry and ceramic production still form part of the current of rural life among the Indian remnants—a current slackened but not entirely stopped. Above all stands the art of feather weaving, a migrant estheticism from some distant southern milieu. Happily the ancient technique has not been too long abandoned by the deft fingers of past generations to have been entirely forgotten by a few aged women still living. The fishing and canoeing customs of these riparian tribes and some social-economic characteristics of their quondam hunting life, even a few of its mechanisms, have not passed completely away. Survivals, however, are not to be found collectively intact in any one tribal community. They have come down as separate parts, some here in one band, others there in another, according to irregular factors of persistence. In these traits appear combined the characters of sedentary Iroquois culture and those of the more nomadic Algonkian.

Past records of ethnology do not give us a satisfactory

answer to the many questions that arise in systematic thought of the region. For, while Hariot (1588), Percy (1607), Smith (1607), Strachey (1612), and Beverley (1722) have left historical accounts, and some descriptions of economic and military institutions, the all-important topics of religion, mythology, and social organization, as well as fine-arts and language, remain woefully neglected, at least in sufficient thoroughness to permit comparison with other culture areas of North America. Among subsequent writers Jefferson (1801) recorded a few notes, possibly from observation, but for the greater part the tendency was to quote the past from earlier sources rather than to draw upon the natives themselves. A glance at practically all recent published matter on the Virginia tribes betrays its derivation from earlier chronicles, perhaps reinforced by a visit of a few hours' duration to the village of the better-known Pamunkey. In this category fall the entertaining but unethnological work of C. W. Sams, *The Conquest of Virginia The Forest Primeval* (New York, 1916), and J. G. Pollard's *The Pamunkey Indians of Virginia*, published by the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, 1894), which also incorporates some information on this tribe recorded by E. A. Dalrymple in 1844. In contrast with the casual essays of recent writers mention should be made of a careful summary of the ethnic properties of the Powhatan area presented by C. C. Willoughby in 1907 (*The Virginia Indians in the Seventeenth Century*, *American Anthropologist*, n.s. vol. 9, no. 1) and a historical sketch of the Confederacy and its tribes, with population statistics, by Mooney in

the same year (The Powhatan Confederacy Past and Present, *ibid.*).

The present monograph then is the second of a series intended to place on record observations of contemporaneous culture conditions among these communities scattered through the Chesapeake region. The first to appear was The Nanticoke Community of Delaware (*Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation*, vol. II, no. 4) in 1915. A study of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi has been completed to form the third memoir. In a recent article in the *American Anthropologist* (Ethnic Position of the Southeastern Algonkian, vol. 26, no. 2, 1924), I arranged the culture problems of the area as they stand forth, with some attempt at suggestion of characteristics diffused from centers in the Southeastern or Gulf area. This was the outgrowth of impressions expressed by Willoughby and by Swanton.

My own introduction to the Powhatan remnants commenced in 1914 with a visit to the Pamunkey, an inevitable step in the plan of investigation of the contact problem between the Gulf culture area and that of the eastern Algonkian, with whose northern members in New England and Canada I seem to have cast my lot. During subsequent winters, when occasion arose, I sojourned, in no reserved nor socially minimized sense of the term, with all the Indian communities so far known in the state except those on the lower York and Potomac rivers mentioned by Mooney. The associations formed in these circles from 1919 to the present carried me into the closest intimacy with every aspect of their life.

Collections of several hundred ethnological specimens were made for the Museum during this time, and photographs of the people and their activities were obtained.

There still remains much to be learned from these people—much of value to American democracy as well as to anthropology. My efforts have only initiated the process. Of the groups still remaining to be carefully investigated, the Chickahominy and the Nansamund are the most promising.

FRANK G. SPECK.



GEORGE L. NELSON

Chief of the Rappahannock and of the reorganized
Powhatan Confederacy of Virginia

ROBERT H. CLARKE

Councilor of the Rappahannock

THE RAPPAHANNOCK INDIANS OF VIRGINIA

BY FRANK G. SPECK

HABITAT AND EARLY HISTORY



IN PERCY'S well-known narrative of his voyage to Virginia in 1605,¹ the account is given of his meeting with the Weroance, "king," of Rapahanna, and some particulars are presented of a tribe bearing this name living above the "Paspikes" and below the country of the "Apamaticca." This narrative is likely to be regarded by historians as the first specific reference to the natives who constituted the band residing on Rappahannock river, who were known later as the Rappahannock Indians.² Nevertheless, more careful scrutiny of the reference brings it out clearly that the chief referred to in Percy's chronicle was not in any way connected with the people of the stream mentioned, but that he was the leader of a small band which lived on the south

¹ Observations by Master George Percy, 1607, in *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625*, ed. by Lyon G. Tyler, New York, 1907, pp. 13-14.

² Dr. Tyler, editor of the *Narratives of Early Virginia*, identifies (op. cit., p. 13, n. 2) this chief of Rapahanna with the band on Rappahannock river, who came over, he states, "in order to assist in resisting the landing of the explorers." Where he finds reason for assuming this is a mystery. W. R. Gerard, in his article "The Tapehanek Dialect of Virginia" (*Amer. Anthropologist*, vol. vi, no. 2, 1904), correctly distinguishes between the two similarly named bands.

side of James river somewhere between the falls, where Richmond now is, and the site of Jamestown: a people whose geographical situation among the James River bands makes it most probable that they formed an integral part of the same group. This, I think, will become clear when we examine more carefully the narrative and the circumstances involved.

Percy records that on May 4 the chief of Rapahanna came from the other side of the river (James) in his canoe, that he took displeasure at Percy's being with the "Paspikes" and that he "would fain have us come to his towne." The next day, the 5th, the "Rapahanna" chief sent Percy a messenger asking him to come to him, and he went. The messenger showed him the way, and the English were entertained with dancing and feasting, all of which, together with the town itself, are graphically described in the narrative. On May 8 (op. cit., p. 14) the English "discovered up the river, landing at Apamatica." The sense of the observations is that all these movements were in the same general neighborhood on James river. Had Percy actually meant that he went to the Rappahannock river, it would have entailed an extended journey of at least a hundred miles, some forty miles down the James to Chesapeake bay, thence sixty miles to the mouth of the Rappahannock, not to mention the distance within that river, through treacherous waters at that time still unexplored by the English. And this all between the 5th and the 8th of May. He has much to say about the Paspiche tribe and its country, hence during these three days he could not possibly have

wandered far from these precincts. Furthermore, on July 27 the "King of Rappahanna demanded a canoe, which was restored," and then follows a description of a ritual of sun worship. None of these references implies that the cavaliers were far from Jamestown.

In the contemporary account of these troublesome times by Capt. John Smith,³ while only about twenty miles from Jamestown, Captain Newport signified an intention to visit "Paspahégh and Tappahanocoke, but the instant change of the winde being faire for our return we repaired to the fort with all speed." Again (Tyler, *op. cit.*, p. 39) the soldier-author made a hurried trip to "Topohanack" while preparing to ascend James river, and Tyler, who in a previous footnote locates Percy's "Rapahanna" on the distant Rappahannock river, now says that Quiyoughcohannock in Surry county is intended. Evidently by the coincidental situation of the two, the Rapahanna were identical with the Quiyoughcohannock. Reasons for the confused identity are easy to find when one considers the redundancy of local names, which is very common in Virginia toponomy. For instance, the name Mattapamient and its variants, Mattapanient and Mattaponi, occur in the Chickahominy country (Tyler, *op. cit.*, p. 41), and again in the Mattaponi country (p. 85). Even in the Nanticoke territory of Maryland, across Chesapeake bay, there was a Mattapanent,⁴ while far up in Maryland,

³ John Smith's *True Relation*, 1607, in Tyler, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁴ D. G. Brinton, *Vocabulary of the Nanticoke Language*, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. xxxi, 1893.

on the Patuxent river, dwelt still another people called Mattapanient (Tyler, *op. cit.*, p. 87).⁵ Thus we also find such names as Rickahock and Rockahock occurring as place-names still preserved on the Chickahominy, Pamunkey, and Mattaponi rivers,⁶ among the present-day natives, while again Wighcocomoco occurs on both sides of the Chesapeake, once in what is now Maryland on the western shore, near the mouth of the Potomac (Tyler, *op. cit.*, p. 86), and again on the eastern shore in Nanticoke country (p. 89). Most surprising, moreover, is the mention of "Rapahanock" even here (p. 89) as the name of a river on the east side of the bay.

We are accordingly obliged to turn to later sources for the first mention, in the exploration of Virginia, of the little-known but still surviving division properly constituting the tribe of Rappahannock inhabiting the great river of the same name.⁷ Capt. John Smith, it seems, was the first to mention the tribe and to discuss its condition.

The event of Smith's capture in his attempt to explore the Chickahominy region in 1607 resulted in something more being recorded in the early chronicles concerning

⁵ I infer, incidentally, that the word denotes a "landing place," by analogy with *Penebscot madapenán*.

⁶ Strachey, in his glossary of Virginia Indian words, gives *rockahoc* as meaning otter. Many otter are still trapped by the Indians on these rivers.

⁷ Strachey (*History of Travail into Virginia*, 1612, *Hakluyt Society ed.*, *op. cit.*, p. 37), who is the principal source of information on the language of Virginia, notes that Rappahannock river was also formerly known by the name *Opiscatumek*. His other observations on the peoples of the region practically repeat what John Smith had written.

the Rappahannock. While he was carried from village to village as a captive, he says:

“From hence this kind King conducted mee to a place called Topahanocke, a kingdome upon another River northward: The cause of this was, that the yeare before a shippe had beene in the River of Pamaunke, who having beene kindly entertained by Powhatan their Emperour, they returned thence, and discovered the River of Topahanocke: where being received with like kindnesse, yet he slue the King, and tooke of his people, and they supposed I were hee. But the people reported him a great man that was Captaine, and using mee kindly, the next day we departed.

“This river of Topahanock seemeth in breadth not much lesse than that we dwell upon [i.e., James river]. At the mouth of the River is a Countrey called Cuttata women: upwards is Marraugh tacum, Tapohanock, Appamatuck, and Nantaugs tacum.”⁸

The most extended account of the habitat and numbers of this band comes again from the pen of Capt. John Smith, who explored the Rappahannock and published in 1612 the following description of the country and people:

“The third navigable river is called Toppahanock. (This is navigable some 130 myles.) At the top of it inhabit the people called Mannahoackes amongst the mountains, but they are above the place we describe.

“Upon this river on the North side are seated a people called Cuttatawomen, with 30 fighting men. Higher

⁸ Narratives of Early Virginia, Tyler ed., op. cit., p. 47.

on the river are the Maraughtacunds, with 80 able men. Beyond them Toppahanock with 20 men. On the South, far within the river is Nantaughtacund having 150 men. This river also, as the two former, is replenished with fish and foule.”⁹

Later Smith again referred to the Rappahannock, on his return from the exploration of the Potomac, declaring that he had “much wrangling with that peevish nation; but at last they became as tractable as the rest.”¹⁰

Mooney gives several references to the history of the tribe.¹¹ He states that in 1654 a large force was sent against the Indians on the Rappahannock river, but no details are given. In the Virginia census of 1669, 30 Rappahannock are listed under their proper name, and 50 under the name of Nantaughtacund. Again, in 1675-77, after Bacon’s Rebellion, a treaty of peace included mention of the Nantaughtacund, a name which we find frequently used in referring to the bands lying south of the Rappahannock river toward the Pamunkey. I agree entirely with Mooney that this name may be correctly used as a synonym for the tribe. Beverley (*circa* 1722)¹² is responsible for listing the Rappahannock in Essex county as extinct. This could not have been true in his time, as there must have been many fugitives in the region, though of course, it being so soon after

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹¹ The Powhatan Confederacy Past and Present, *Amer. Anthropologist*, vol. ix, no. 1, 1907.

¹² Robert Beverley, *History of Virginia*, Richmond, 1855, p. 18.

Bacon's Rebellion, individuals might have generally denied their names to escape persecution.

Considerable difficulty arises when one attempts to trace the history of the Rappahannock descendants through the last century. Several reasons are accountable for such a condition, one being that any family records which may have existed in the court-houses of the counties inhabited by the descendants were destroyed by the Northern forces during the Civil War. Another influence tending to obliterate the national name has been the long-cultivated habit of the Virginians to class all people of color as negroes. Thus the obliteration of the Indian name in the Rappahannock country has been almost complete, so far as outsiders have been concerned. Were it not for the fervor and pride of the descendants themselves, the name would have been as obsolete as that of many other Eastern tribes whose fate has probably been sealed by similar forces.

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND LANGUAGE

It is evident, therefore, that on this huge watercourse, known for more than three centuries as Rappahannock river, there existed a division of the Powhatan group which politically was weakly united with the York River¹³ and James River peoples under Powhatan at the time of the settlement of Jamestown. The Rappahannock, or Nantaughtacund, tribe was not one of

¹³ Those who were situated at the center of this area we shall refer to as the Pamunkey, adopting the practice of early Virginia writers.

Powhatan's original inheritances. Lying so near the Potomac, where his sway seems not to have crossed to the north, the Rappahannock were evidently later acquisitions to Powhatan's confederacy. There is good reason for believing that the Rappahannock tribes



FIG. 1.—Councilman James Johnson. (Photo by D. S. Davidson,)

often proved troublesome to the great leader, a condition which shows forth in a peculiarity of village distribution to be mentioned shortly. Owing to its distant situation from Powhatan's headquarters, the Rappahannock group, when compared with the tribes of York and James rivers, was of a somewhat divergent culture type.



"OLD BOB" NELSON, THE RAPPAHANNOCK PATRIARCH

SPECK—RAPPAHANNOCK



RAPPAHANNOCK WOMAN—MRS. BEVERLY H. BYRD

Nothing definite, however, respecting customs or peculiarities was ever recorded which might aid the ethnologist to define the ethnic position of the band. As to dialect, we have nothing save a few place-names, which, since they show the usual forms characteristic of the other Powhatan dialects, oblige us to classify Rappahannock with the rest. The important conclusion drawn some years ago¹⁴ by the late W. R. Gerard, an enthusiastic but careful Algonkianist, that there existed in eastern Virginia a group of dialects wherein *t* appears in forms showing *r* in the other dialects which he termed the "Tapehanek," does not apply to the band with which we are now concerned. We may devote a moment to the review of place-names in the counties occupied by the Rappahannock. A series of journeys through the district on foot and an examination of the Geological Survey chart¹⁵ give forth the following topographical terms which plainly show the *r* equivalents.

Rappahannock, meaning "river where the tide rises and falls,"¹⁶ the name of the principal river and a creek near the town of Tappahannock, Virginia.

Rickenaw, a creek flowing into the Mattaponi river above Walkerton in King and Queen county. Strachey

¹⁴ *Amer. Anthropologist*, vol. vi, no. 2, 1904.

¹⁵ Aylett Quadrangle, United States Geological Survey. This sheet covers most of the territory now and probably formerly occupied by this band of the Powhatan group.

¹⁶ According to Gerard (*Amer. Anthropologist*, vol. vi, no. 2, 1904, p. 320), whose etymological reasoning seems good. W. W. Tooker (*ibid.*, no. 5, pp. 676-77) suggests "the country of exceeding plenty" by a rather forced etymology. Heckenwelder also renders the name as "the stream with ebb and flow" (*Lappi-hanne*).

(op. cit., p. 186) gives the term *rickewh* as meaning "to divide a thing into halves."

Marracossik (*marakòsik*), a creek flowing into the upper Mattaponi near Bagby in King and Queen county. This creek is navigable for canoes, and so was undoubtedly used by the natives as a means of entrance to the high land between the Rappahannock and Mattaponi rivers.

West of the Rappahannock, in the ascents of the Piedmont region, the Mannahoac were their neighbors.¹⁷ Contact with this group is inferred to have been hostile, according to the testimony provided in Capt. John Smith's chronicles. The Rappahannock evidently extended as far as Fredericksburg, near where the falls of the Rappahannock mark the geographical division between the Coastal plain and the Piedmont. On the south extended the related Powhatan Algonkian—the Mattaponi and Pamunkey. The stretch of country between the Rappahannock and the Mattaponi, the river next southward, averages ten miles in width at this point, then widens to some twenty miles as the streams diverge in descending toward the bay. The Mattaponi band evidently bordered the Rappahannock habitat immediately on the south. Both the Mattaponi and the Pamunkey seem to have been close political and

¹⁷ Every vestige of this people, whom Mooney supposes to be of Siouan stock, has apparently gone, unless it be that some of the families of Indian blood dwelling in Rappahannock county prove to be sprung from resident Indians and not from foreigners, Cherokee or Powhatan, wandering into the region.

social relatives, the nucleus of the Powhatan confederacy. Evidently the Rappahannock for their part were politically more separate from these peoples; hence the slight culture differentiation between the two groups is, as we find it in the modern ethnological survivals, a somewhat natural one. What the relationship in any form may have been between the Rappahannock and the bands north of the Rappahannock river is still a matter to be considered. We have practically no records of the population north of the river toward the Potomac, hence all that can be expected is that some surviving information and specimens of material culture may be obtained in this neck of country from the remnant of the Indian population which we know to reside there, but which thus far has never been visited. On Potomac creek, six or eight miles from Fredericksburg, some Indian families still reside, evidently descendants of the local Algonkian on this portion of Potomac river. They have not, however, had any relations with the Rappahannock people, and know only vaguely of their existence.¹⁸

¹⁸ This small band, which, for the want of actual identity, we may call Potomac, is engaged in farming and fishing. A few articles of home manufacture and some folklore may later, when better known, establish the supposition with more certainty that the ethnology of the Potomac region was in general somewhat more uniform with that of the Nanticoke and Conoy. On the evidence of what has been recorded concerning them and from contemporary observations, I have ventured to indicate a minor culture boundary at this point on a map giving the distribution and groupings of the tribes of the Powhatan group. See *Ethnic Position of the Southern Algonkian*, *Amer. Anthropologist*, vol. xxvi, no. 2, Apr.-June, 1924.

The ethnic groups about which least is known have generally proved to be, unfortunately for the prospects of ethnography, those of great relative importance. Such, in the field of Algonkian research, are the Beothuk of Newfoundland, the tribes of southern New England, and the Powhatan tribes of Virginia.

An important observation on the location of early villages may be made on a survey of Capt. John Smith's map of Virginia in 1607. The villages on the Rappahannock are mostly on the north shore; only five villages and two chief towns, denoted on his map by the figure of a wigwam, are shown on the south shore of the river within the proper bounds of the present Rappahannock habitat. On the north shore, however, thirty-four villages are located and named on the same map. A reason may be inferred: it is conceivable that the pressure of Powhatan made it advantageous for the Rappahannock River bands to place the waters of the river between themselves and the Powhatan central groups for their better protection.

PRESENT STATUS

Mr. Mooney has given us the last printed word on the Rappahannock band in his paper of 1907, in which, referring to the members of the Powhatan Confederacy of the present day, he says:

“Another band of nearly the same number is situated south of Rappahannock river about Lloyd or Battery post-office, in upper Essex county, the most common family name being Nelson. They are said to show as

much of Indian blood as the Pamunkey, holding themselves apart from both white and negro, and are represented as fairly prosperous and intelligent. They are probably the descendants of the old Nantaughtacund



FIG. 2.—Son of Robert H. Nelson of Alps, Va.

tribe, known later, with others, under the name of Portobacco."¹⁹

Had Mr. Mooney taken occasion to visit these people himself, he would have found that his information regarding them was quite accurate.

¹⁹ Mooney, *The Powhatan Confederacy Past and Present*, *Amer. Anthropologist*, vol. ix, no. 1, p. 141, 1907.

At present the Rappahannock descendants are widely distributed as farmers through Essex, Caroline, and upper King and Queen counties. Those who live near the Rappahannock river engage in fishing, though the great majority of the descendants occupy the high land between this river and the Mattaponi, and are strictly farmers and lumbermen. To a certain extent they preserve the tradition of their earlier economic culture, especially in regard to agriculture and hunting. Vestiges of material culture also survive. It may be said of them, as of the Pamunkey and the other Powhatan bands, that certain practices have been maintained from the old days, modified of course by present-day circumstances, in connection with those industries which are of native origin. Folklore and old tales have had their share of preservation. In respect to their consciousness the Rappahannock may be said to possess the same tenacity of feeling and purpose as regards their tribal identity as the kindred Powhatan bands. In 1919 they effected an organization which has since been incorporated under the laws of Virginia as The Rappahannock Indian Association. They maintain friendly relations with the Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and Chickahominy, and visit back and forth among these bands, with whom, to a slight extent, they intermarried in the past.

Area; Number; Physical Character.—An economic feature of some interest may be observed in connection with the habitat and distribution of this band. The people inhabit a region roughly estimated to extend

about fifteen miles east and west and about twenty-five miles north and south, in which it is said the whites number not more than about one-third of the total population. In this proportion the Rappahannock descendants are estimated by their leaders to include fully 500 to 600, some think even more; though of course



FIG. 3.—Children of Chief George Nelson.

only a small number of these have so far actually enrolled themselves in the tribal organization. The rural post-offices are generally represented as towns in the settlements of the counties inhabited by the Rappahannock, though many of these centers may consist of but one or two houses. Indian Neck is virtually the center of the community. Beazley, Owenton, Central Point, Whites, Alps, and other post-offices through to Port Royal and Loretto on the Rappahannock, are points where the

Indians trade. Many of them not enlisted show as much of the Indian appearance as those who properly bear the tribal name. The observer is not at all impressed by any indication of racial homogeneity among the members of the band as a whole. This is noticeable in the accompanying portraits. Even though the great majority are interrelated, being members of the same original patronymic families, yet only in one feature, that of color, do they all coincide, ranging practically within the description of light medium-brown. Many have brown hair; in many it is wavy, in some fine and straight. Until, however, the head measurements of some groups of the Virginia Indian descendants have been worked out, it is impossible to present results. It may be observed, however, that the mean cephalic index for the Rappahannock is 77.92 (eight individuals), the mean average of ninety-three individuals among the five Powhatan tribes of Virginia being 77.72. The Rappahannock head form may be given as meso-brachycephalic (Y. S. Nathanson, *Analysis of Some Algonquin Measurements*, University of Pennsylvania, 1924).

Habitations and Home life.—The Indians now mostly dwell in well-built, painted farmhouses of the two-story type, the kitchen generally being separate from the bedrooms in the ordinary Southern style. Yet in some of the remote districts—and there are those thirty miles or more from any railroad station—rather primitive conditions prevail, showing an economic stage that is regarded with good reason as the first transitional one from the period when they dwelt in wigwams. Probably



Mrs. Robert P. Nelson

RAPPAHANNOCK TYPES



Mrs. James Otho Nelson

SPECK—RAPPAHANNOCK

PL. V



RAPPAHANNOCK GIRLS OF CENTRAL POINT

none of these old-fashioned Rappahannock plantations are more typical of the period than that inhabited by "Bob" Nelson and his family consisting of two unmarried sons and a daughter (pl. II, x, XIV, fig. 4). In a tract of short rolling hills, which the natives refer to in all seriousness as "peaks," of an average rise probably not more than twenty feet above the general level, is Bob's plantation. Five or six acres of cornfields, in which "corn-field beans" are planted at the foot of the cornstalks, constitute Bob's domain. Surrounded for a number of miles by a heavy growth of mixed short-leaf pine (*Pinus taeda*) and "spruce pine" (*P. Virginiana*), and tracts of varied oaks, his log-houses present a scene of remoteness and solitude that seem in proper accord with the solitary character of this old Indian. Not far from his houses are swamps of oak and gum where, until a few years ago, he was accustomed to kill his wild turkeys, sometimes as many as thirty to forty in one season. Bob has been an expert marksman with his muzzle-loading gun, which he fondly treasures now in his old age with a deep feeling of friendship. A log-house of one room, with whitewashed interior, forms his dwelling, in which, on a home-made cot, the old man spends much of his time. The open fireplace has only recently been discarded for the iron stove. The interior is furnished with benches, board tables, and little else, except some baskets which the old man has made himself, and other rough-hewn appurtenances which contribute still more to give his home the appearance of the "old days." A kitchen-house of plain boards

across a well-beaten dooryard where the sand and clay are tramped into a hard floor, several bowers of pine branches and cornstalks to furnish shelter to his flock of hens, and other roughly constructed outhouses, with no fence to surround them, complete the human evidences of domestic alteration in the forest landscape of his immediate neighborhood (fig. 4).



FIG. 4.—Plantation and cabins of “Old Bob” Nelson near Beazley, 1919.

These homesteads are generally to be found near some old spring, in which, generations ago, hollow gum-logs were forced into the sand, forming the “Indian wells” which are spoken of in the country-side. At such places one will often find the old cocoanut gourd with a gum-stick handle attached through two holes (fig. 11, *a*), out of which refreshing drafts are quaffed by those who depend on these natural springs for their water

supply. About the buildings of Bob's homestead may be seen the gourd vessels, drinking cups, water-butts, and the swinging gourds suspended high upon a tilted pole to provide nesting places for the purple martins whose coming in April is eagerly watched for. Gourds, however, are nowadays not so much used as formerly, when the Rappahannock made a practice of casting the seeds upon a piece of ground intended for them, in order to grow a crop of the useful fruit. It was considered, they say, bad luck to plant gourds, but the vines never failed to grow, it seems, when sown in this haphazard way. The older accounts of Virginia ethnology frequently refer to the gourds as utensils with which every household was amply provided. In Bob's house the visitor will not look in vain for the old-fashioned home-brewed persimmon beer. Wooden pot-stirrers (figs. 16, 17), the long oval bread trays (fig. 18), which are described as indispensable in the early Indian household, square baskets of white-oak splints (fig. 6), all of which will be described later, and rib-baskets (fig. 7), lie in confusion here and there, emphasizing the general impression of home-made domestic equipment which the visitor usually feels is appropriate to an Indian holding of earlier days.

Some years ago the visitor would have seen bows and arrows, but Bob is now too old and feeble to make these for the young people who come to see him. In the evening, when the lamps are lighted and the animals have been bedded down, Bob, always wearing his tattered felt hat, spends an hour or two with his family and

visitors, enjoying the amusements of the old times. Story-telling, the narration of hunting and other experiences in the woods and swamps, vie with tales of the Civil War, which is still a source of sentient interest among the Rappahannock. So passes away that hour or two intervening between the cessation of daily work and the time when tired nature responds to the need of sleep. Drowsiness saps the sources of humor and recollection, the narration or the discourse, whichever it may be, lags, and soon those present move to the cots and beds, where they lie in their clothes and sleep till morning.

The general economic air of this age of life in the log-house among more remote Rappahannock families is characteristic not only of the Indian communities of Virginia, but reminds one forcibly of the conditions prevailing among the Cherokee in the mountains of North Carolina. The natural surroundings, however, can never be confused, for no one would mistake the heavy damp air, the fogs, and the general levelness of the tidewater country for the light dry atmosphere and the inspiring peaks which are everywhere presented to the roaming eye in the ancient land of the Eastern Cherokee.

Many of the Rappahannock descendants have risen from the picturesque conservatism of the old life. But the details of the modernized furnishings and manners of the more sophisticated members of the band do not interest the visitor sufficiently to create any impression worth recording.

TRADITION

National consciousness has been kept alive among the Rappahannock by a tradition which, with a certain license, we may call their national legend, at least so far as the numerous Nelsons in the tribe are concerned. The following version of this interesting tale was recorded from the lips of old Bob Nelson in 1919. Since this time, however, Bob's faculties have waned, so that an attempt two years later to record the story in better form proved futile. I give his version as nearly as possible in his own words.

"Long ago, before the Revolution, the Indians owned this country, every bit of it, and held it against all their enemies. It was given to them by the Creator to keep and occupy, but when the white people came, those whom we call the English, they had religion and other advantages which the poor Indians did not have, and so when fighting arose between the two people the English always won. But the Creator did not mean that the English should kill every one of the Indians. He designed it so that, when nearly all were killed, the very man who had most to do in killing them off was to become the one who would cause them to come back in this country and multiply, as you see them doing today. That is how it happens that I am sitting here talking to you this very day. Now I will tell you how this came about, and who it was that brought the Indian race back into this country after he had tried so hard to kill us off.

"Captain Carey Nelson was a great man among the English. He came from a family of the best blood and

lived in a fine big house. Captain Carey was a great leader in the wars against the Indians, and he drove them from river to river, and killed many of them. Finally, he thought that he had either killed or driven them all away and that the country was free of them. But one day, when he was riding through the woods on his fine horse, chasing the deer, he came across a big log lying in the trail. This log was hollow. When he started to go by it, he looked down and there saw three little Indian girls hiding in it in fear of their lives. Captain Carey was surprised at the beauty of the three children, and, thinking that there were no more of their people about, he took them home with him. Now, he raised them in his family like ones of his own kin, and they grew up to be fine ladies and the pride of the family. The most beautiful of the three Captain Carey chose for himself and took her to wife. And thus he raised a family of children which grew and increased until now you see all through these counties 'squads' of Nelsons who are all descended from Captain Carey Nelson. It was the Creator's plan that the man who drove the Indians out and killed them off should have been the means of bringing them back. One of the other girls became the wife of Capt. Lewis Johnson, and another was given to an Englishman of good family named Spurlock, to become his bride. Both of these men reared large families and helped to bring back the Indian blood in this part of the country. I say it was the Creator's will that caused this to be done, and so we are here today, descended from the best English blood and the best Indian blood."

Old Bob formerly took great pleasure in recounting the story, always adding his quaint commentaries on the revival of the Indians, who, he believed, were destined to play an increasingly important part in the building up of "The Neck" of land, as it is locally called, between the Rappahannock and Pamunkey rivers. He was always eager to establish the identity of Captain Carey Nelson in the Colonial history of Virginia, though he realized that it would not be an easy matter to do so, knowing that the local archives of King William, Caroline, and Essex counties had been destroyed during the ravages of the contending armies in the Civil War.

A revision of this story is made by the present chief, George L. Nelson (pl. 1). He corrects the identity of Captain Carey Nelson, identifying the hero of the adventure as Thomas Carey Nelson, assumed to be the same as the noted governor of Virginia. The Nelsons possess a family genealogy connecting them with this individual, which they claim is a correct one—a statement which I have made no attempt to dispute. By this authority also, a reputed brother of Thomas Carey Nelson, Colonel Robert, similarly married another of the little Indian girls.

Bob traced his own genealogy back to Captain Carey Nelson through four generations. One of Captain Carey's sons was Edmund; one of Edmund's sons was Joshua, and Joshua Nelson was Bob's father. Bob's age, about seventy-eight in 1921, gives us a bit of basis for dating the Captain Carey event, first assuming, of course, that it is founded on partial truth. By inference Bob's

father was born about 1805. Edmund Nelson would then date back to about 1775, and Captain Carey's Indian bride, let us say, to about 1750. At this time the great struggles with the Indians in Virginia had ceased. Yet it was only twenty-eight years before this date that the Virginia tribes made a treaty of peace with the Iroquois, the latter agreeing to cease their hostilities against the Powhatan bands.²⁰ Until, however, Captain Carey Nelson be found in Colonial documents, one feels that the Nelson legend may be hardly more credible than other romantic family legends, and with such a conclusion we may close our remarks concerning it.

With the decline of this genial and simple-hearted old man, we have lost one of our best sources of knowledge concerning native life of the last century. Yet his half-brother, Sam Nelson (pl. xi), remains a source to be utilized profitably for research. Sam's father was a noted herb doctor, one who was credited locally with many cures.

The recollection of their ancestral affiliation with the Powhatan confederacy is another tradition among the Rappahannock. Before the present tribal name came into general use among them, they were accustomed to employ the term "Powhatans" in designating their own community.

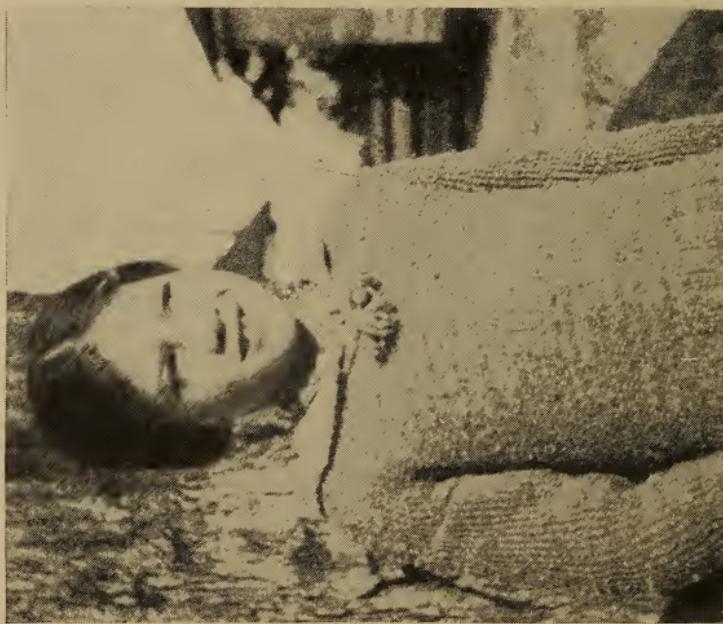
RELATIONS WITH WHITES

The perplexities of contact with the white man have not ceased, even at the present time, despite the well-

²⁰ Mooney, *ibid.*, pp. 147-151.



TYPES OF RAPPAHANNOCK WOMEN IN CAROLINE COUNTY, VIRGINIA



Elsie Nelson

Mr. J. B. and Mrs. Kate D. Richardson
RAPPAHANNOCK TYPES

known docility and orderliness of the Rappahannock in their neighborhood life, as well as in their domestic affairs. They have been, and perhaps still are, accused of being capable of intrigue, as though such a thing could be possible within fifty miles of the capital of one of the most prominent Eastern commonwealths. Resulting from years of mild social subjugation, a state of timidity has developed among certain of the more remotely situated families, producing a dread, which has actually been expressed in my hearing, lest "some one might want to kill them" for presuming to move toward a citizen Indian organization.

While imagination, to be sure, should play very little part in scientific construction, it is permissible in some cases to fill in small gaps of our knowledge by innocent conjecture. We may do this, I feel, with some reasonableness in determining the cause of the silence in historical annals concerning the Rappahannock band in the period of its decline and its revival in recent years. The one thing directly responsible for the loss of historical records was the destruction of the county archives previously referred to. Next, however, is a social factor. On every hand we are told by those who remember the stirring times of reconstruction, that the numerous Indian descendants all over the tidewater section of Virginia were induced by the "carpet-baggers" to assign themselves to the status of "colored people" in order to acquire the new franchise rights as Republicans. Following such advice, many of the Indians, also fearful in part of the supposed dislike which the

settlers have held against Indians in general from Colonial times, resigned themselves to the situation, and many sent their children to "colored schools" and went to "colored churches." It required years for them to reconsider the situation and take remedial action.

OTHER INDIAN REMNANTS

At the close of the Indian persecutions in eastern Virginia, which focused in the period following Bacon's Rebellion, there were left many scattered Indian fugitives throughout the wide tract of tidewater streams and swamps. Otherwise there would not be in existence today so many communities comprising their descendants. Each season of exploration, mostly on foot, in this extensive section of the state, so interesting to the ethnologist and the naturalist, discovers the hiding place, as it were, of some hitherto unknown band—people with an Indian tradition, a noticeably Indian physical appearance, certain customs and traditions, and in particular the habit of social exclusiveness and intermarriage. Not far from the Rappahannock, for instance, is a band of about seventy-five souls living an exceedingly conservative life on the edge of a swampy tract which is their hunting ground. These people are known locally as the Adamstown Indians. Living not far from the Mattaponi river, they may, I believe with every conviction, be properly identified as the remnant of the upper Mattaponi tribe. These people still manifest the bearing and secretiveness of fugitives, as remarkable as this may seem. Another such community I have

only recently chanced upon, dwelling just north of Richmond in Hanover county, which may be a relic of the Powhatan sub-tribe; and another, still known as Skeeter-town, on the western edge of the Dismal swamp. And there are still other traces, north of the Rappahannock river in Northumberland county. The situation, on the whole, reminds one forcibly of the refugee Seminole in the Everglades, the Eastern Cherokee in North Carolina, and some scattered Creeks in Georgia, all of whom are descendants of natives who escaped the drag-net of an Arcadian deportation nearly a century ago.

THE RAPPAHANNOCK INDIAN ASSOCIATION

For the sake of making, at this period of our Indian history, a record of contemporary conditions comparable with that published by Mr. Mooney in 1907, an estimate of numbers of the recognized Rappahannock in 1921 will be given. The list is prepared by their chief, George L. Nelson. These are all members of the citizen Indian organization. Residing in the neighborhood are many others who have not come into the band for various reasons, among which may be perceived questions of blood and of social affinity.

List of Heads of Families and Dependents

Number of children

Chief George L. Nelson and wife.....	4
Assistant chief Otho S. Nelson and wife, Susan P. Nelson, Secretary.....	1
Treasurer James O. Nelson and wife	5
Councillor Robert H. Clarke and brother (nephews and nieces).....	6

Councilor Beverly H. Byrd and wife.....	10
Councilor Kate D. Richardson (deceased)	
Assistant Secretary Ora R. Byrd and husband..	4
Samuel C. Nelson (wife deceased)	
Charles H. Nelson and wife.....	2
Harry G. Nelson and wife.....	4
Captain C. Nelson and wife.....	1
James E. Nelson and wife.....	5
Robert Nelson (wife deceased)..	
Thomas C. Nelson and wife.....	10
Colonel P. Nelson and wife.....	1
Robert P. Nelson and wife	
Maggie A. Nelson (husband deceased)	
William H. Nelson (wife deceased).....	3
Willie R. Richardson and wife.....	6
John B. Richardson (wife deceased)	
Robert Clarke and wife	
Viola V. Moyal.....	3
Ryland Byrd and wife.....	2
Susie Byrd.....	2
Martha Fortune.....	5
Eugene Parker and wife.....	1
Adults, total 42.	75

Unmarried Adults

Sammie V. Nelson	Frank E. Fortune
Joshua G. Nelson	Carroll B. Fortune
George D. Nelson	Andrew Gould
Milton C. Nelson	Richard Gould
Fannie Richardson	Dora R. Martin
Debell Richardson	Arthur E. Pitts

Total 12

Summary

Families	26	Adults, married...	42
Children	75	Adults, unmarried.	12
		Total.....	129

(According to a statement furnished the writer by Chief Nelson in January, 1923, this number has been increased by births and accessions to 373, and some have been dropped from the rolls. Some officers have changed since this was written.)

DIALECT

In considering the present life of this band, it must be recognized that but a single word, as a conscious survival of the native dialect, has withstood the attrition of two centuries of contact with English. Scattered words in the Powhatan dialect have come to light among the other bands, even a short vocabulary or two in recent times, but the closest questioning has failed to unearth more than the one term *ra'rep* in what was the Nantaughtacund or Rappahannock dialect. This term, however, is interesting. Had one the choice of a single word to preserve in an obsolete tongue, it might fall upon this, since it is the designation for "Indian." Equally distinguished in respect to its native origin, the red-kernel corn bears the name "*Rarep* corn," that is, "Indian corn," since this is considered to have been the favorite variety of maize cultivated among the early natives.

So much for our lone word survivor. From it we may proceed to infer that, in agreement with the few local place-names previously noted, the Rappahannock was an *r* dialect and that it bore a close affinity with the central Powhatan dialect on the Pamunkey and Mattaponi rivers. I have little hesitation in feeling, before all the possibilities may be dismissed, that other isolated words may still be discovered here in the local designations of certain plants and animals; just as has been the case in Pamunkey, where, until lately, it was thought futile to hope for the survival of a single native vocable.

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

A change has taken place, within two generations, in the vital activities of the Rappahannock. They have changed from fishermen to farmers. Hunting has declined in the last thirty years from an important rôle to a mere avocation. There are yet a few families, however, who sustain themselves by fishing, but these dwell only near Loretto and Port Royal.

House-sites; Illumination.—Among the facts pertaining to early home-life the Rappahannock descendants remember that the wigwams of their ancestors were erected generally under or near beech trees, through the belief that the beech was never struck by lightning. The terrific thunderstorms which disturb the daily climate of the Virginia summer make this precaution, at least so far as folklore is concerned, not altogether an illogical one. Old Sam Nelson, in offering reminiscences of early days, says that the huts were lighted by means of "fat-wood," splinters of the heart of pine containing the pitch, stuck into a gourd bowl partly filled with clay. As these flambeaux burned down, they were replaced by others, and there was no danger of anything taking fire, in view of the protection afforded by the clay.

Bows and Arrows.—While hunting was followed as a profession by many of the men two generations ago, there are now practically none who gain their living in this way. Bows and arrows are known, and still may be found in the hands of an occasional boy. The construction of the bows is about the same as that of the other Virginia Indians of today, showing the squared and

widened central portion which, according to testimony, gives strength and an improved grip. The Pamunkey and Mattaponi term this the "buzzard-wing." Hickory and white-oak are said to be the favorite materials for bow-making. Arrows with sharpened points, but with no feathering, are characteristic of the whole region. Concerning arrowpoints, we have the most interesting survival of the knowledge of turkey-spur points, several of which were obtained to show the retention of an implement which was described by several early writers as the property of the Virginia Indians. Reference to the method of attaching arrowpoints will be made later.

Archery.—The practice of archery was more serious prior to the Civil War. We learn that in the time of Sam Nelson's grandfather some of the Indians used to go to the towns and shoot arrows at coins attached to trees by white men who wanted to wager on their marksmanship. Sam's grandfather was noted as an expert archer and hatchet-thrower in these contests.

Hunting.—The hunting methods of the Indians during the last century in this part of the state seemed to have been different from the practices employed by the Pamunkey. The latter used the drive, and since they followed the watercourses and swamps, the deer were, and still are, usually killed in the river. The Rappahannock, however, living far from navigable rivers followed the still-hunt, and so we hear of their efficiency in tracking and shooting deer and wild turkeys in the high pine woods or in the oak and gum swamps which diversify the landscape of their habitat. Edmund Nelson, who

gained his living by hunting, is recalled to have killed twelve wild turkeys at one shot. The method employed seems to have been common to this region. A drill or furrow was made at a place where the turkeys were known to feed, and at one end of this was constructed a blind in which the hunter concealed himself with the utmost care. A quantity of corn placed in sight in the furrow provided the lure for the wary birds, which were attracted to the scene by the hunter imitating their sound with a turkey-caller made of the wing-bone of a gobbler. Specimens of these interesting and aboriginal callers, uniformly similar, have been obtained from practically all the tribal bodies in Virginia. As elsewhere in the Powhatan area, the Rappahannock hunters called the turkeys to them by means of these "yelps" at evening time by concealing themselves in a swamp near where the turkeys were known to come to roost. We have few details of anything distinctive concerning hunting practices beyond those here recorded.

INDUSTRIAL SURVIVALS

Basketry.—The most complete chapter concerning Rappahannock industrial life is that dealing with basketry. There are still several good basket-makers in the community. Old Bob Nelson, who has already been referred to, is one of the most expert. A representative collection of wares is shown in the illustrations (figs. 5-7, 12). The common forms are those with rectangular bottoms and handles, or with circular bottoms. They are all constructed of splints of white oak, worked



ROBERT P. NELSON



RAPPAHANNOCK WOMAN



Esther Nelson



Rebecca Nelson

out with a knife. No gauges or other finishing tools are used. The round-bottom baskets, known locally as "rib baskets," seem to be about as numerous as the other kinds in this particular tribe. Some of them are larger and more strongly made than any of this type that have been collected from other localities.



FIG. 5.—Baskets made of rushes, the larger one (*a*, height $8\frac{1}{2}$ in.) on a willow foundation with braided grass filling.

A word or two concerning the "rib baskets" shown in fig. 7. These shapes are used more as corn baskets in this locality, the stout handle providing an edge upon which the cob is grated to remove the grains. In other words they are hulling baskets. The woman shown in pl. x was hulling her peck of corn in this manner. She had been to the corn-crib, filled her basket with ears, and was hulling them into the same basket—a rather

convenient arrangement, as can be seen. The wide range of the so-called "rib basket" has been commented on, but I have never before seen the basket thus employed.



FIG. 6.—Oak splint baskets of ordinary types. (Height of *a*, 7 in.)

A specification in the construction of baskets seems to stand forth with considerable prominence in all the examples that have been collected in this general region—roughly speaking, in the tract lying north of the



FIG. 7.—Splint baskets of melon form. (Width of *b*, at handle, 15½ in.)

Pamunkey river through to the Potomac waters. I call this peculiarity a distinctive feature of the basketry of the northern Powhatan area. It has not been encountered in specimens collected from the Pamunkey south-

ward, and yet it occurs in a large proportion of the baskets made by all the Indian remnants from Fredericksburg through to the Potomac river and Chesapeake bay. We next encounter the accentuated feature in the basketware of the Nanticoke descendants in Delaware, which seems to show the northern provenience of this type of rim. The sketch (fig. 8) shows the details of this rimming in both types of Rappahannock baskets, and again in specimens obtained from the Nanticoke.

I refer to the auxiliary rim-hoop, which is made to lie upon the inner and outer rim-hoops to which it is bound by an extra loop in the withe that binds the hoops to the body of the basket. Thus there are three rim-hoops in the baskets of the type under observation. The auxiliary hoop strengthens the basket considerably, but it especially gives a certain finish and beauty to the appearance of the receptacle. The Rappahannock sometimes utilize strips of the inner bark of the hickory for the rim binding of baskets. This, so far as I am

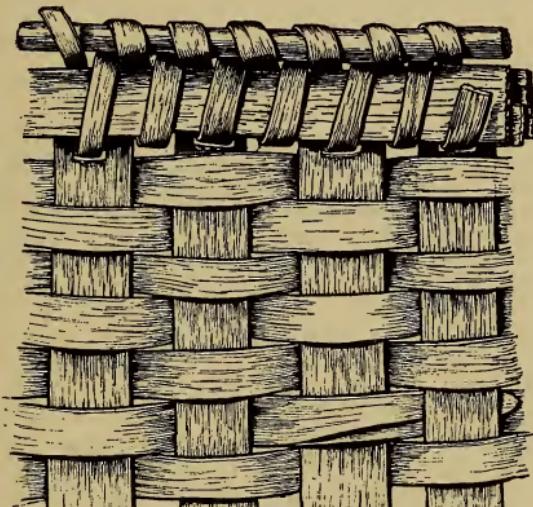


FIG. 8.—Detail of splint basket.

aware, has not been recorded anywhere in the Eastern region, except among the Cherokee. In another article²¹ I have commented on the significance of variations in the basketwork of the tribes of the Atlantic coast from the Southern states to northern New England. The basket products of the Rappahannock seem to fall harmoniously into the scheme outlined.

The next type of basket is undoubtedly of ancient origin. The Rappahannock are the only Virginia people, so far as present inquiry has disclosed, who have been able to produce baskets woven of what they call "rushes." Rushes turn out to be the blades of *Juncus* or *Scirpus*, which grow abundantly in the lowlands of this region. While green, these blades are woven by the twill method on a foundation of willow rods. Baskets of the type illustrated in fig. 5 are produced as examples of those which the ancients used for carrying corn and seeds. In one specimen of this type the foundation, instead of being willow rods, is of twisted rushes, the same as the filling. The larger baskets have the rushes braided in three-ply, which makes the filling stronger. The rims of the rush baskets are generally thick wrappings of the rushes themselves over a single willow hoop.

In their accounts of the Virginia Indians, John Smith and Strachey gave descriptions of corn baskets made of "grass" among the Indians of that day, to which this type would seem to answer. Judging by the hundreds

²¹ Decorative Art and Basketry of the Cherokee, *Bull. Public Museum of Milwaukee*, vol. II, no. 2, 1920.

of bushels of corn contained in "grass baskets" extorted from the native villagers by Smith in the winters of privation succeeding the settlement of Jamestown, some such woven wares answering to their description must have been of exceedingly great abundance. We may well wonder why some vestiges of those "grass baskets" have not come through to the present day—a reflection which somewhat strengthens the circumstantial as well as the traditional claim of the specimens brought to view. A number of the older members of the community have

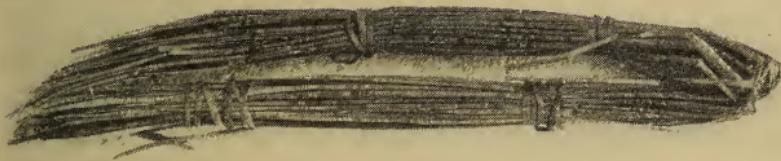


FIG. 9.—Bundle of *Scirpus*, rushes used in basket-making and for tying.

knowledge of this type; the specimens represented, however, were made by Susan B. Nelson, the present secretary of the tribe.

The cane basketry, which becomes more and more prominent as we go southward, seems to have no place in the industrial art of any of the Powhatan tribes. Cane (*Arundinaria*) is common in a number of places along the upper Rappahannock river, but the present people make no reference to its use in basketry.

The grass baskets of the early days may very likely have included forms constructed of *Yucca filamentosa*, a plant known to the Rappahannock descendants in Virginia today as "bog grass." At Pamunkey and

elsewhere it is "silk grass." This is almost worthy of being rated as a cultivated product, for from it the people still procure material for cordage and tying (fig. 9), if not for basket weaving. To prepare it, the long tough leaves are split into widths of about half an inch and placed on the stove or near the fire for a moment or two to heat, by which treatment they become tough and pliable. As among the people of the South in general, the "silk grass" is employed in tying meat in hog-killing time. But many of the Rappahannock make it perform the service of string and cord, and to those whose homes are from twenty to thirty miles from the great iron highway it is particularly serviceable. So they show us how the ancestors employed it. "Bog grass," as they denote it, although it flourishes in the driest sandy localities, may have been utilized in ancient basketry, but no definite claim is made to this end, nor has anyone thus far produced a specimen of construction. There is hardly an old house-site in the Indian neighborhoods of the tidewater region where it is not to be found in a bed somewhere, showing how it was colonized by the former tenant. It is highly probable that the "silk grass" so eagerly sought by the Virginia settlers and alluded to by Smith, Hariot, Strachey, and Beverley, as the material of Indian basket-making, was the same *yucca* which actually bears that name among the other Powhatan peoples. Its occurrence in Virginia, which is considerably north of the original habitat zone in South Carolina, presumably has a history like that of other Southern austroriparian flora,

evidently having been conveyed northward by trade among the Indians as one of the minor economic necessities. An interesting reference in Capt. John Smith's narrative relates how a party of explorers set out from near Jamestown, traveling southward to the Chowan river, across the North Carolina frontier, to investigate a clue of the rediscovery of some survivors of Raleigh's lost colony, and incidentally, to search for "silk grass."²² This material was regularly obtained in trade with the Indians.

Mulberry fiber.—The use of mulberry fiber still survives. The explorers' narratives of Virginia make occasional reference to receptacles and fibers woven of mulberry-bark. The trees were at that time planted about the Indian wigwams, not only for their shade and fruit, but for the supply of fiber which they provided.

John Smith says: "By the dwelling of the savages are some great Mulberry trees; and in some parts of the countrey they are found growing naturally in prettie groves."²³ Mulberry-bark entered into the weaving technique of most of the tribes of the Gulf area.²⁴

Robert H. Clarke (pl. 1), a Rappahannock who has taken considerable interest in ethnological survivals among his people, sent me several arrows with stone points attached in aboriginal style (fig. 10). They were bound in place with mulberry-bark, prepared in such a

²² Narratives of Early Virginia, Tyler ed., p. 163.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁴ Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, English trans., London, 1763, vol. II, pp. 23, 191-92. J. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, London, 1775, pp. 422-23.

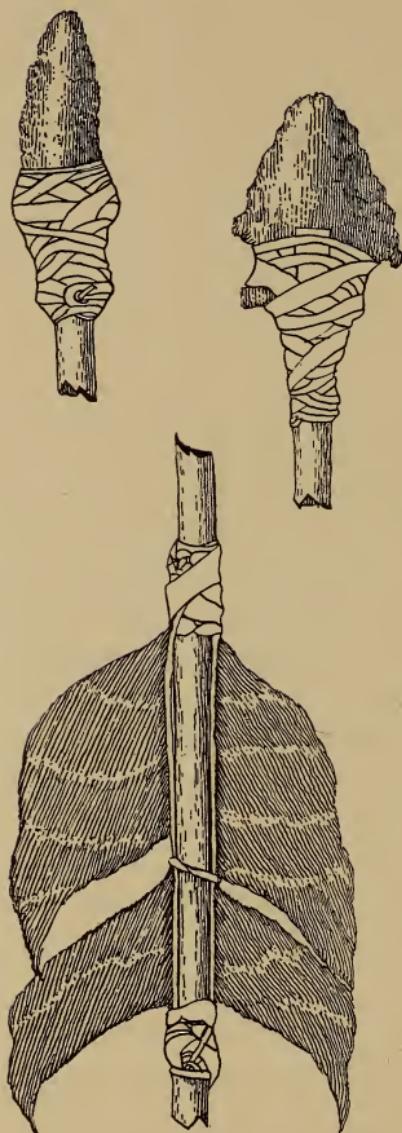


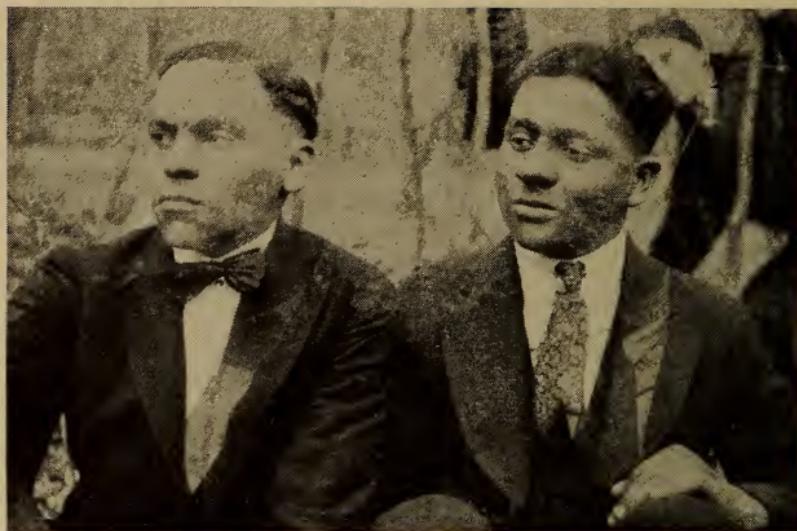
FIG. 10.—Method of attaching stone points and of feathering arrows.

way as to make the attachment very firm and serviceable. His description of the method of preparation is as follows: "The material that the arrowheads are bound with is the inner bark of the mulberry tree. When the sap is up, one can easily strip the bark off. Then it is cured in the shade for a few days, then put into water. The coarse outer bark then can easily be taken off. A treatment of this kind several times will toughen it, and make the strongest kind of cord. The arrows are bound when they are wet, making the fastening tighter by contraction. In regard to the baskets being made of the bark of the mulberry tree, I have not the least doubt. I believe such things as game-litters and wigwams were fastened together with these."



DOLLY NELSON, DAUGHTER OF "OLD BOB" RAPPAHANNOCK WOMAN SHELLING CORN ON THE HANDLE OF A NATIVE "RIB" BASKET





RAPPAHANNOCK BOYS OF THE FORTUNE FAMILY



SAMUEL NELSON, A RAPPAHANNOCK ELDER

Dyes.—Among several of the dye substances referred to by the early writers, we may possibly identify the plant known today as pokeberry. Mr. Clarke refers to this himself in the following words: “The stain is called *poke*. This is a native plant. The root of this plant and the leaves are used for medicine. There is an abundance of berries of a purple color. This the Indians used as a war paint and to decorate and stain their bows and arrows and to color their moccasins with.”²⁵

Several roots provided stains for the natives in the days of colonization, among them *pocones*, *wighsacan*, and *musquaspenne*, names which have received various interpretations. *Wighsacan* is evidently “yellow root,” and *musquaspenne* is evidently “red.” Smith said *wighsacan* was a medicine applied to wounds. *Pocones* and *musquaspenne* were described as red in color, and were dried and used as coloring substances. *Pocones* “is a small roote that groweth in the mountaines, which being dried and beate in powder turneth red: and this they use for swellings, aches, annoiting their joints, painting their heads and garments. They account it

²⁵ To this day Virginia negro women, living within easy reach of Washington, D. C., cut off the reddish shoots of *poke*, when only three or four inches out of the ground in the spring, tie them in small bunches, and sell them in market as greens for boiling like asparagus. These are known as “poke salad.” The shoots are always eaten when very young, otherwise they acquire a rank, weedy flavor, and are said by some to be even poisonous. It is certain that the use of *poke* as food is of Indian origin, for the Virginia tribes, as well as the New England Mohegan (inf'n Miss G. Tantauquidgeon), still eat the young shoots of the plant.

very pretious and of much worth."²⁶ If it were not that the root, not the berry, is referred to so definitely, we could feel satisfied from its use and name that "poke" was in the mind of the writer.

Gourds.—All of the older writers dwell on the extensive use of gourds in this region. Strachey and Hariot figure several types and several uses for gourds as water receptacles and as food containers, evidently as dishes.



FIG. 11.—Water ladle of cocoanut-shell (a), funnel of gourd (b), and gourd receptacle (c). (Length of a, $18\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

Among the various bands of Virginia Indians, until a generation ago, gourds were commonly employed in similar capacities. Otho Nelson, a Rappahannock, for instance, recalls how, when he was a boy, his father would send him to the spring with a large gourd vessel holding at least a gallon, and in shape identical with the one figured by Strachey and again in Smith's History of Virginia. His boyhood memory was impressed by the deep sound of the water slopping within its cavernous hollow as he trudged up the spring-path holding it by

²⁶ Narratives of Early Virginia, op. cit., p. 93.

his fingers hooked in the orifice. Occasionally a gourd may yet be found in one of the kitchens doing service as a salt container, a seed holder, or to hold drinking water for dog or fowl. Several forms are illustrated (fig. 11). A rather remarkable custom connected with the cultivation, or perhaps lack of cultivation, of the gourd, is encountered among all the Virginia groups so far questioned, from the Chickahominy to the Rappahannock. It was considered unlucky to plant the seeds. The method of propagation was merely to cast the seeds upon the ground, by which uncertain procedure the annual supply of gourds was left to be replenished. The distribution of the gourd in its wild state and its extension to the north as a cultivated plant among the Eastern Indians lay the foundation for a supposition that this was another of the important commodities of the natives. References to gourd cultivation among the Indians of the Middle Atlantic states show what we might expect: a southern nativity apparently for both the family itself and its domestic utility. The northward ascent is represented by the tropical *crescentia*, or calabash, and the south temperate *Cucurbitæ*, the squashes and pumpkins, the latter often employed as are the gourds. An interesting opinion is voiced by the people of today, namely, that gourds do not grow now as they once did. Decadence, incidentally, is also asserted among the Indians here for the native grapevine. In the American tropics, throughout its native habitat, gourd or calabash is extensively used by the natives and profusely decorated with pigment or by

incision. The farther we encounter it from its wild zone, the fewer its artistic associations and the smaller its size. None of the Algonkian of the southern coast have been reported to decorate gourds, and, considering the sources, it seems likely that they never did. Almost certainly the Virginia tribes did not. It would be most desirable, as the next step in tracing the history of gourd

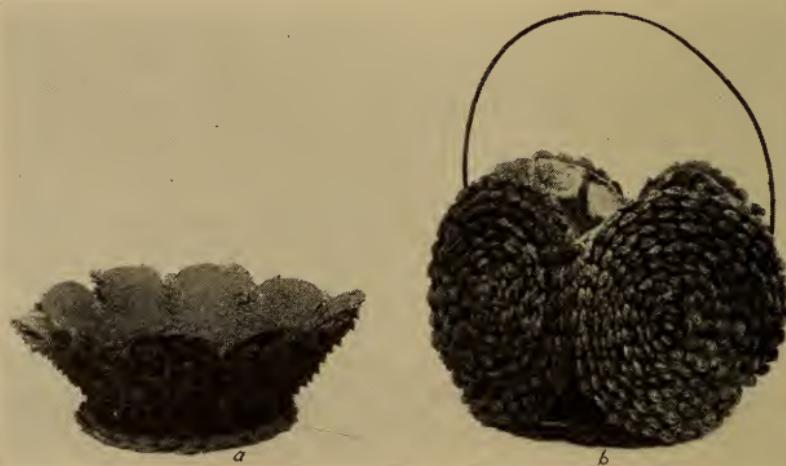


FIG. 12.—Baskets with pine-cone decoration. (Height of *b*, not including handle, 6 in.)

culture, to have continuous data through the more southerly tribes to the Gulf of Mexico, and especially to ascertain at what limit the decoration of gourds ceases in the northward perspective.

Pine-cone Baskets.—Receptacles for small feminine wares and fancy articles, the so-called pine-cone baskets of the Rappahannock, are somewhat unusual. A number of the women make them, sewing the blades of

cones of the yellow pine one by one upon a surface of cardboard, or of stiff leather as in one case (fig. 12), then joining the pieces together to form the basket of shape desired. Where the suggestion of this art could have originated, it seems at present unsafe to say. Nothing quite like it is reported from the rural white communities, though I do not doubt that here the origin is to be found. However, like many other matters dealt with in a community study of this nature, it is not the exclusive aim either to trace or to emphasize the strictly Indian qualities or survivals, but to make entry of all that has been observed in contemporaneous industry, to serve as a record of the region and the period.

Featherwork.—That most interesting Virginia art, namely, featherworked fabric knitting, which savors so strongly of Southern influence, has not left any tangible trace of its survival among the Rappahannock, so far as I know. From the lips of an old woman of this band, J. R. Nelson's wife, I have heard that in her younger days she had seen the woven turkey-feather articles which are still known among the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi. It may still be possible to obtain specimens here, as was done at the other places just mentioned.

Ceramics.—Pipe-making and ceramics, it seems, passed out of existence among the Rappahannock before the Civil War. It is indeed unfortunate that some vestiges of clay-working did not continue until a later day, at least in memory, as they have among the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi.

FOODS AND AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS

Native Plants.—Throughout this region the natives in olden times resorted to moist ground where they gathered the roots of *Apios tuberosa*, known to the tribes of the Powhatan area under various names, but everywhere eaten either dried or roasted in the embers of a fire. In early literature of Virginia we hear of their being called *penauk*,²⁷ a word which in common Algonkian would signify some kind of “earth substance,” and could be used, as it is in fact in different areas, to designate anything from a potato to an artichoke, or even that curious vegetal anomaly called *tuckahoe* (*Pachymos cocos*)²⁸ which will be referred to shortly. The tubers of *Apios*, which the Rappahannock call “ground nuts,” are no longer sought, except by children and some of the old people who retain their appreciation of the things they used to eat before these days of luxury were known to the dwellers in the back districts. In the rest of the Powhatan area the name is the same, while the Nanticoke of Delaware style them “grass nuts.” Artichokes likewise were gathered and eaten. To them the settlers applied the common name of “Indian potato.”

The *tuckahoe* of the Pamunkey, and of Colonial

²⁷ Narratives of Early Virginia, Tyler ed., p. 97, gives *ponap* as “bread,” evidently a misspelling. *Pone* (see article in Handbook of American Indians, Bull. 30, Bureau of American Ethnology) is of Virginia Indian derivation. In Canadian Nanticoke the word survives in its pure form, *ā'pan*.

²⁸ Cf. J. H. Gore, Tuckahoe or Indian Bread, *Smithsonian Report*, 1881.



RAPPAHANNOCK WOMAN AND CHILD OF ALPS



GROUP OF RAPPAHANNOCK CHILDREN



GROUP OF CHILDREN



SAMUEL NELSON, JR., HIS SISTER SUSAN P. NELSON, AND
HER DAUGHTER

literature, which has come to be a commonly adopted term in English, is known as "Indian bread" at Rappahannock. But so far as practice is concerned, it is a thing of the past from the point of view of diet. It is even a rare occurrence when one of the curious fungus-like growths, with its dry chalkly interior, is discovered in plowing the soil of the pine tracts. Like their Powhatan allies, however, the Rappahannock used to bake these growths and eat them. However, we may as well leave the historical discussion of these interesting native plants, their names and identities, to a forthcoming monograph by Dr. Laufer.

Survivals.—Perhaps a word should be said about contemporary conditions in this part of Virginia, to place on record an account, however brief, illustrating the conditions under which the mixed-bloods of the tidewater countries have acquired such influences as have reached them from the outside world. This part of Virginia has been aptly described as showing a phase of rural American life which has become almost static. It is to be observed that whatever was new to the Englishman when he invaded the country retained its Indian form almost as much as the places in the land retained their original Indian names. The corn industry illustrates this in almost every stage, as may be seen from the following descriptions.

Cooking.—The Rappahannock of today still cook foods in a manner represented as a survival of Indian days. The ever-present corn-bread needs no description. Hoe-cake, or johnny-cake, is remembered, and ash-cake

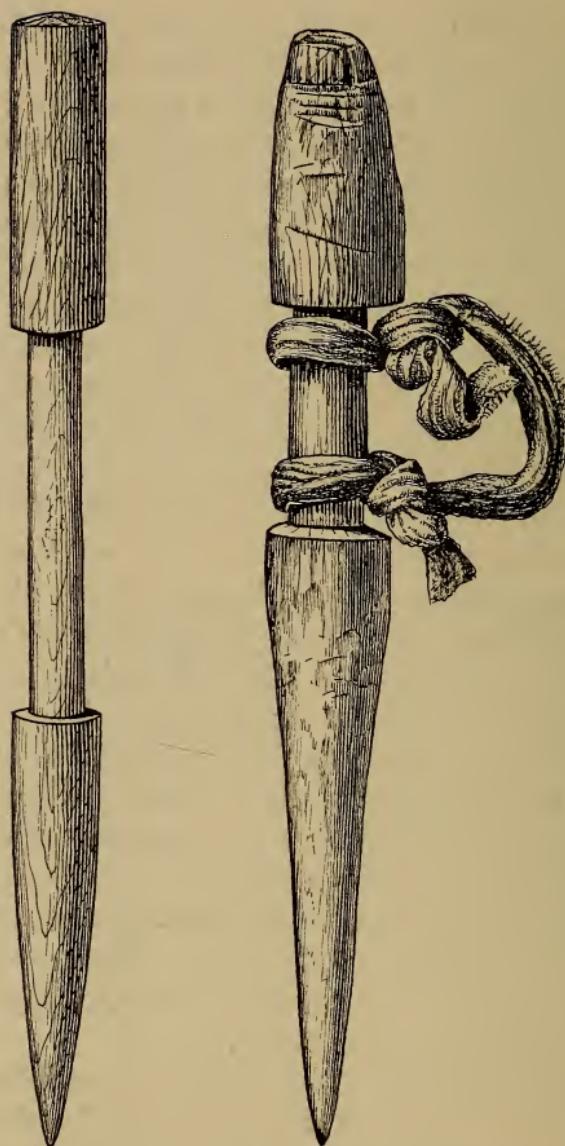


FIG. 13.—Corn-shelling pegs. (Length, $5\frac{3}{4}$ and $5\frac{5}{8}$ in.)

is still occasionally seen, or better eaten. In native style the older people prepare and relish muskrat, raccoon, and opossum, while fish are cooked in a number of ways said to be of native origin, and undoubtedly truly

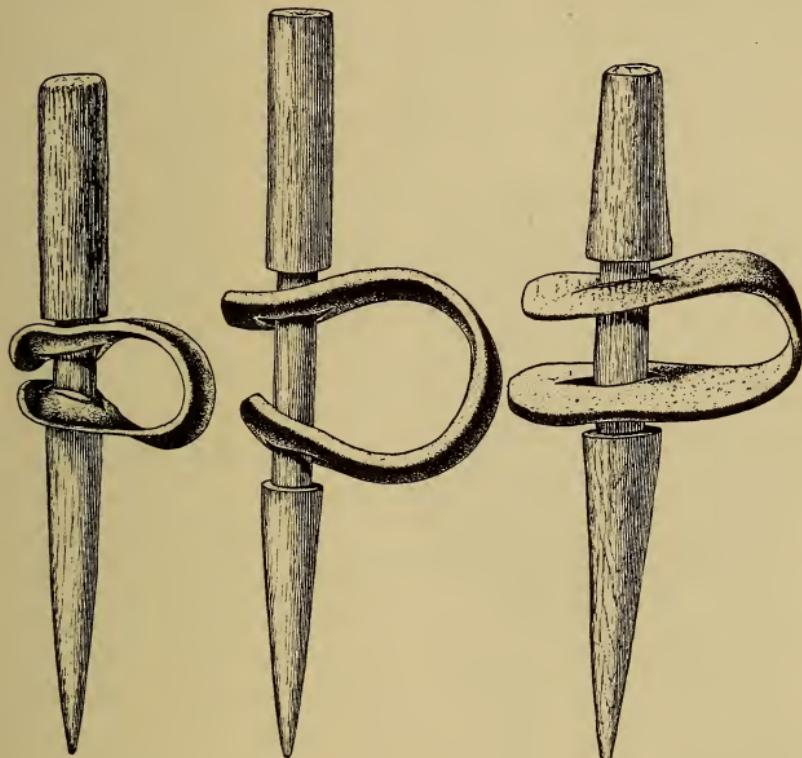


FIG. 14.—Corn-shelling pegs. (Length of middle example, $5\frac{7}{8}$ in.)

so, so far as the manner of including the heads in the dish is concerned.

Food Implements and Utensils.—Corn foods, as might be expected, are of paramount importance in such a region of extreme corn-fertility. The cultivation of this

indigenous grain has caused the retention of several methods and implements which are rather plausibly also native in origin or development. The wooden or bone corn-husking peg is found in the hands of Indians from the northern limits of corn culture among the Iroquois and southern New England Mohegan, to the Gulf tribes. The Rappahannock corn-pegs, shown in figs. 13, 14, differ to a slight extent from those of the

other Virginia groups. In most examples they show the single groove cut away widely between the holes in the leather gripper. In fact, there is a slight variation observable in the average of many specimens collected from the related neighboring tribes in Virginia, making something of a point in this particular of tribal variation in type, in such a small matter of detail.

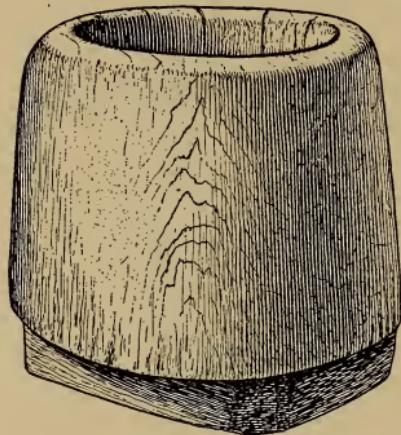


FIG. 15.—Wooden mortar. (Maximum outer diameter, 6 in.)

as unusual as it might seem of detail.

Corn mortars are not now in use, though the type is that of the straight-sided log (fig. 15), the same as at Pamunkey and in fact throughout the Gulf area. The wooden stirrers, or paddles, called mush-sticks, however, show the rather distinctive feature, in the majority of cases, of having shoulders on the sides, though some are

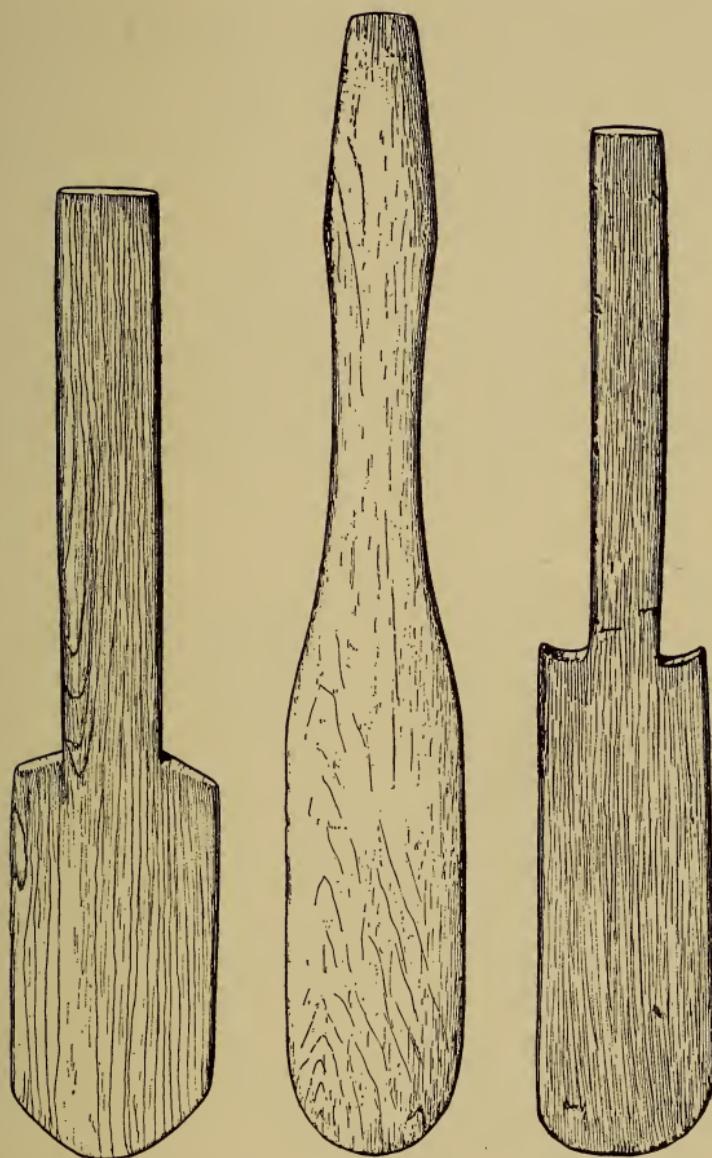


FIG. 16.—Cooking paddles. (Length of middle example, 14½ in.)



FIG. 17.—Cooking
paddle. (Length,
24 in.)

²⁹ Tyler in *Narratives of Early Virginia*,
op. cit., p. 154.

plain-sided like the ordinary southern Indian stirrers (figs. 16, 17). We have the testimony of Capt. John Smith in reference to the antiquity of the pot-stick. He mentions a woman's dance in which each performer carried one in her hand.²⁹

Perhaps the rarest and most distinctively aboriginal utensil surviving among the Virginia Indians is the gum-wood bread-tray (fig. 18). Several much-worn specimens from Rappahannock show that the type is identical with that known from the Pamunkey and the other Powhatan allies. One of these was obtained from the Byrd family near Central Point; the other was still in use in the household of old Bob Nelson. The latter had been patched in several places, where it was worn through, with pieces of leather. These bread-trays are often mentioned in old accounts and described as we see them. Corn-meal was mixed in them and made into loaves. They are highly cherished as heirlooms in the families which still possess them.

Other Native Objects.—Several other native objects remain to be mentioned before closing this meager account of technical products.

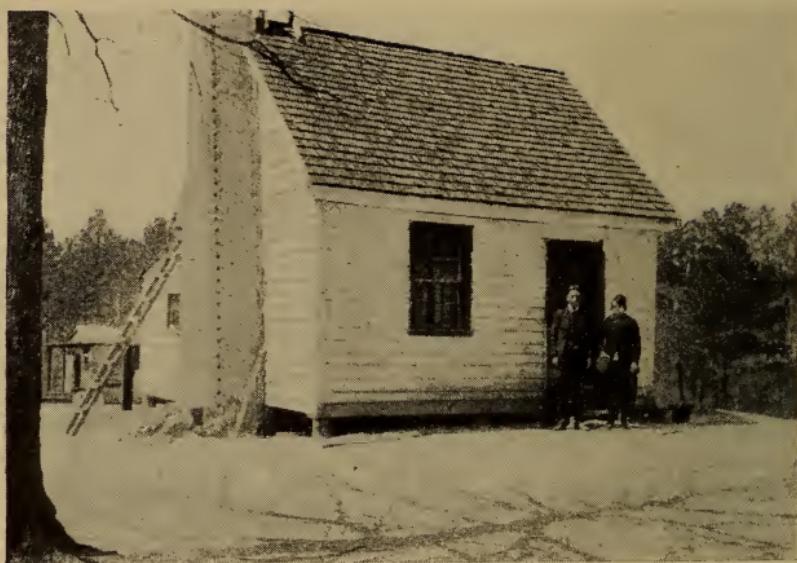


RAPPAHANNOCK GIRLS

The second girl from the left is a Mohegan of Connecticut



CHIEF COOK OF PAMUNKEY (AT LEFT) AND "OLD BOB"
NELSON. 1920



TYPICAL HOUSE WITH "MUD-AND-STICK" CHIMNEY



4 RAPPAHANNOCK HOMESTEAD

Combs of dogwood (fig. 19) were in common use a generation ago, but few specimens can be traced now to inform us what variations there were in type.

Like the Pamunkey, some of the Rappahannock have preserved the woodcarving genius of the old Algonkian.



FIG. 18.—Bread trays of gum-wood. (Length of *a*, 21½ in.)

Although the carved holly pipes are not found in use here as they are among the Pamunkey, nevertheless we have several specimens of attempted portraiture in wood. One of them, easily the best to have come forth, is a cane or staff of red cedar, at the top of which is a mass grouping of four Indian faces directed toward the four quarters (fig. 20). The maker of this well-executed design, Robert H. Clarke, intended the faces to represent the four principal tribes of Virginia.

Wooden pipes (fig. 21) seem to have been used, at least in modern times, as well as clay pipes (fig. 22) of native make. The wooden ones are commonly made

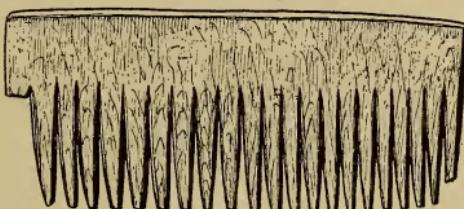


FIG. 19.—Wooden comb. (Length, 3½ in.)



FIG. 20.—Carved cedar staff-head. (Diameter of staff, $1\frac{1}{8}$ in.)

Fig. 21.—Wooden pipe. (Length, 15 in.)

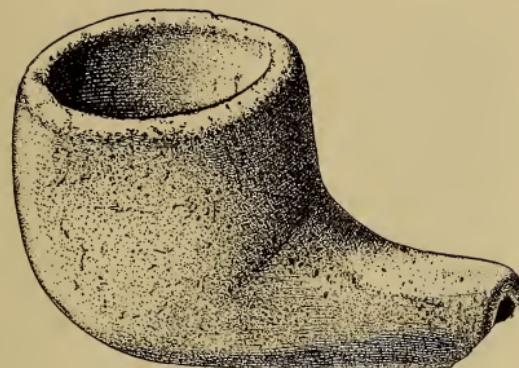
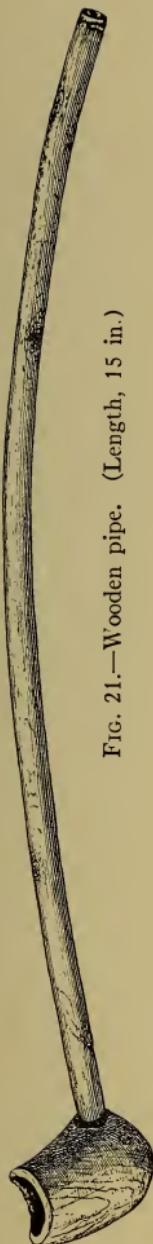


FIG. 22.—Clay pipe. (3)

of holly-root, often of laurel which is locally known as "ivory." They have plain bowls. The specimen illustrated has a long stem of fig-wood, a few trees of which grow in the country.

The maul and wedges for splitting wood here have the general Eastern Algonkian form, though at Rappahannock they are fashioned of dogwood, which is very tough and durable (figs. 23, 24). White people of the neighborhood employ the same materials.

FOLKLORE AND LEGEND

Folklore and local legends are not particularly abundant among the Rappahannock, yet a small collection has been gathered. The results, however, will appear to better advantage embodied with

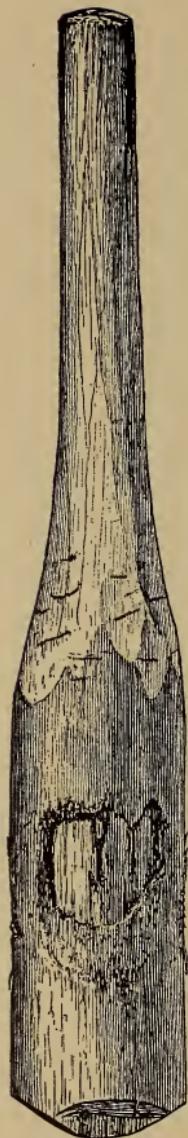


FIG. 23.—Wooden maul.
(Length, 19 in.)

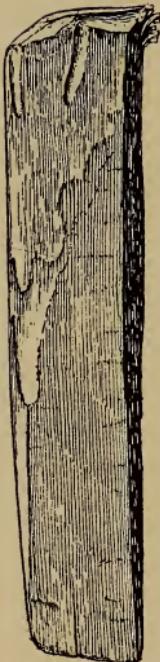
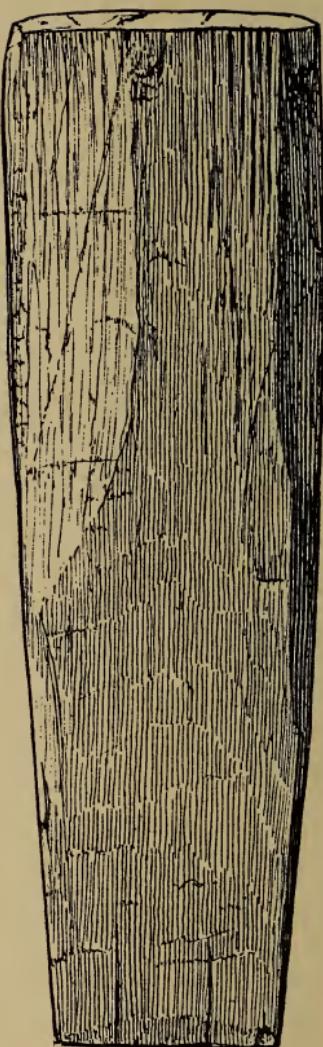


FIG. 24.—Wedges for splitting wood.
(Length, 6 in. and 7 in.)



the material pertaining to the subject from all the surviving Virginia tribes, to form the contents of another paper. Nevertheless, mention of a charm intended to help a child through the teething period is included here (fig. 25). It consists of a small bag, one inch in length, containing a dried mole's foot, which is worn around the infant's neck. A similar belief finds a place in the minds of the other Virginia Indians. Dreams are held in high esteem. The photograph of James Johnson (fig. 1) shows the wearing of a beaded headband to induce dreaming. He is an herb doctor who works his profession through dreams. Some folk-dances are performed by the people, but they are hardly to be considered as direct or continuous derivations from the past. Being revivals rather than survivals, as interesting as they are, their description may be left to a more popular narrative of Virginia Indian folk-ways.

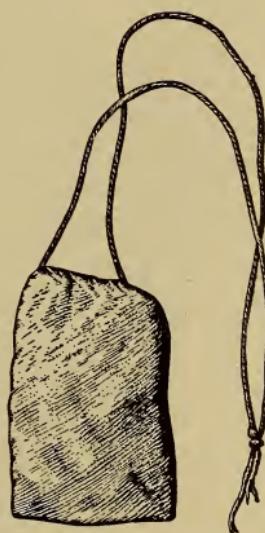


FIG. 25.—Charm used to aid teething. (1)

HEAD-FLATTENING

The Rappahannock have retained a custom which I was surprised, only a year or so ago, to encounter first among the Chickahominy, namely, that of artificially flattening the occiput of infants. This is done by means of a small, rather stiff pillow stuffed with corn-

husks, placed beneath the child's head when it is put to sleep. The child is then induced to repose upon its back, being turned over when it happens to roll over on its side. The Virginia Indian descendants who practise this



FIG. 26.—Fan of wild turkey tail-feathers.

operation assert that it is done to make the head beautiful. At the same time the mother pinches the infant's nose to make it long for the same reason. In commenting upon this curious discovery I feel inclined to attribute it to the survival of an old native practice which the Virginia Algonkian shared in common, though perhaps to a lesser extent, with the Gulf tribes, among so many of which, like the Catawba, Santee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw, we have direct

and emphatic mention of it. Among some few Rappahannock individuals, and the same is true of the Chickahominy, the effect of the pressure during infancy is noticeable to the observer. In some Chick-

ahominy cases the peculiarity was first ascertained in the course of taking cranial measurements with instruments. Whatever may be the outcome of further inquiry into this procedure among the South-eastern tribes, it seems that we shall henceforth be obliged to extend the area of the southern practice northward at least to the Rappahannock river by nothing less than the direct knowledge of its occurrence there.

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